Reeling under the first shock, the poor girl recovered herself with admirable courage. She raised her head and eyed the lawyer without uttering a word. In its artless consciousness of innocence the look was nothing less than sublime. Addressing herself to Mr. Troy, Lady Lydiard pointed to Isabel. "Do you see guilt there?" she asked.

Mr. Troy made no answer. In the melancholy experience of humanity to which his profession condemned him, he had seen conscious guilt assume the face of innocence, and helpless innocence admit the disguise of guilt; the keenest observation in either case failing completely to detect the truth. Lady Lydiard misinterpreted his silence as expressing the sullen self-assertion of a heartless man. She turned from him in contempt, and held out her hand to Isabel.

"Mr. Troy is not satisfied yet," she said, bitterly. "My love, take my hand, and look me in the face as your equal; I know no difference of rank at such a time as this. Before God, who hears you, are you innocent of the theft of the bank note?"

"Before God, who hears me," Isabel answered, "I am innocent."

Lady Lydiard looked once more at the lawyer, and waited to hear if he believed *that*.

Mr. Troy took refuge in dumb diplomacy—he made a low bow. It might have meant that he believed Isabel, or it might have meant that he modestly withdrew his own opinion into the background. Lady Lydiard did not condescend to inquire what it meant.

"The sooner we bring this painful scene to an end the better," she said. "I shall be glad to avail myself of your professional assistance, Mr. Troy, within certain limits. Outside of my house I beg that you will spare no trouble in tracing the lost money to the person who has really stolen it. Inside of my house I must positively request that the disappearance of the note may never be alluded to, in any way whatever, until your inquiries have been successful in discovering the thief. In the meanwhile Mrs. Tollmidge and her family must not be sufferers by my loss; I shall pay the money again." She paused and pressed Isabel's hand with affectionate fervor. "My child," she said, "one last word to you, and I have done. You remain here, with my trust in you and my love for you absolutely unshaken. You are dearer to me than ever. Never forget that."

Isabel bent her head and kissed the kin hand that still held hers. The high spirit that was in her, inspired by Lady Lydiard's example, rose equal to the dreadful situation in which she was placed.

"No, my lady," she said, calmly and sadly, "it cannot be. What this gentleman has said of me is not to be denied—the appearances are against me. The letter was open, and I was alone in the room with it, and Mr. Moody told me that a valuable inclosure was inside it. Dear and kind mistress, I am not fit to be a member of your household, I am not worthy to live with the honest people who serve you, while my innocence is in doubt. It is enough for me now that *you* don't doubt it. I can wait patiently, after that, for the day that gives me back my good name. Oh, my good lady, don't cry about it! Pray, pray, don't cry!"

Lady Lydiard's self control failed her for the first time. Isabel's courage had made Isabel dearer to her than ever. She sank into a chair and covered her face with her handkerchief. Mr. Troy turned aside abruptly, and examined a Japanese vase, without any idea in his mind of what he was looking at. Lady Lydiard had gravely misjudged him in believing him to be a heartless man.

Isabel followed the lawyer, and touched him gently on the arm to rouse his attention.

"I have one relation living, sir—an aunt—who will receive me if I go to her," she said, simply. "Is there any harm in my going? Lady Lydiard will give you the address when you want me. Spare her ladyship, sir, all the pain and trouble that you can."

At last the heart that was in Mr. Troy asserted itself. "You are a fine creature!" he said, with a burst of enthusiasm. "I agree with Lady Lydiard; I believe you are innocent, too; and I will leave no effort untried to find the proof of it." He turned aside again, and had another look at the Japanese vase.

As the lawyer withdrew himself from observation, Moody approached Isabel.

Thus far he had stood apart, watching her and listening to her in silence. Not a look that had crossed her face, not a word that had fallen from her, had escaped him. Unconsciously on her side, unconsciously on his side, she now wrought on his nature with a purifying and ennobling influence which animated it with a new life. All that had been selfish and violent in his passion for her left him to return no more. The immeasurable devotion which he laid at her feet in the days that were yet to come—the unyielding courage which cheerfully accepted the sacrifice of himself when events demanded it at a later period of his life—struck root in him now. Without attempting to conceal the tears that were falling fast over his cheeks, striving vainly to express those new thoughts in him that were beyond the reach of words, he stood before her the truest friend and servant that ever woman had. "Oh, my dear! my heart is heavy for you. Take me to serve you and help you. Her ladyship's kindness will permit it, I am sure."

He could say no more. In those simple words the cry of his heart reached her. "Forgive me, Robert," she answered, gratefully, "if I said anything to pain you when we

"Forgive me, Robert," she answered, gratefully.

spoke together a little while since. I didn't mean it." She gave him her hand, and looked timidly over her shoulder at Lady Lydiard. "Let me go!" she said, in low, broken tones; "let me go!"

Mr. Troy heard her, and stepped forward to interfere before Lady Lydiard could speak. The man had recovered his self-control; the lawyer took his place again on the scene.

"You must not leave us, my dear," he said to Isabel, "until I have put a question to Mr. Moody in which you are interested. Do you happen to have the number of the lost bank note?" he asked, turning to the steward.

Moody produced his slip of paper with the number on it. Mr. Troy made two copies of it before he returned the paper. One copy he put in his pocket, the other he handed to Isabel.

"Keep it carefully," he said. "Neither you nor I know how soon it may be of use to you."

Receiving the copy from him, she felt mechanically in her apron for her pocket book. She had used it in playing with the dog, as an object to hide from him; but she had suffered, and was still suffering, too keenly to be capable of the effort of remembrance. Moody, eager to help her even in the most trifling thing, guessed what had happened. "You were playing with Tommie," he said; "is it in the next room?"

The dog heard his name pronounced through the open door. The next moment he trotted into the drawing room with Isabel's pocketbook in his mouth. He was a strong, well-grown Scotch terrier of the largest size, with bright, intelligent eyes, and a coat of thick, curling white hair, diversified by two light brown patches on his back. As he reached the middle of the room, and looked from one to another of the persons present, the fine sympathy of his race told him that there was trouble among his human friends. His tail dropped; he whined softly as he approached Isabel and laid her pocketbook at her feet.

She knelt as she picked up the pocketbook, and raised her playfellow of happier days to take her leave of him. As the dog put his paws on her shoulder, returning her caress, her first tears fell. "Foolish of me," she said faintly, "to cry over a dog. I can't help it. Good-by, Tommie!"

Putting him away from her gently, she walked toward the door. The dog instantly followed. She put him away from her for the second time, and left him. He was not to be denied; he followed her again and took the skirt of her dress in his teeth, as if to hold her back. Robert forced the dog, growling and resisting with all his might, to let go of the dress. "Don't be rough with him," said Isabel. "Put him on her ladyship's lap; he will be quieter there." Robert obeyed. He whispered to Lady Lydiard as she received the dog; she seemed to be still incapable of speaking—she bowed her head in silent assent. Robert hurried back to Isabel before she had passed the door. "Not alone!" he said entreatingly. "Her ladyship permits it, Isabel. Let me see you safe to your aunt's house."

Isabel looked at him, felt for him, and yielded.

"Yes," she answered, softly; "to make amends for what I said to you when I was thoughtless and happy." She waited a little to compose herself before she spoke her few farewell words to Lady Lydiard. "Good-by, my lady. Your kindness has not been thrown away on an ungrateful girl. I love you, and thank you, with all my heart."

Lady Lydiard rose, placing the dog on the chair as she left it. She seemed to have grown older by years, instead of by minutes, in the short interval that had passed since she had hidden her face from view.

"I can't bear it!" she cried, in husky, broken tones. "Isabel! Isabel! I forbid you to leave me!"

But one person present could venture to resist her. That person was Mr. Troy—and Mr. Troy knew it.

"Control yourself," he said to her, in a whisper. "The girl is doing what is best and most becoming in her position, and is doing it with a patience and courage wonderful to see. She places herself under the protection of her nearest relative until her character is vindicated and her position in your house is once more beyond a doubt. Is this a time to throw obstacles in her way? Be worthy of yourself, Lady Lydiard, and think of the day when she will return to you without the breath of a suspicion to rest on her."

There was no disputing with him—he was too plainly in the right. Lady Lydiard submitted; she concealed the torture that her own resolution inflicted on her with an endurance which was indeed worthy of herself. Taking Isabel in her arms, she kissed her, in a passion of sorrow and love. "My poor dear! My own sweet girl! don't suppose that this is a parting kiss! I shall see you again—often and often I shall see you again at your aunt's." At a sign from Mr. Troy, Robert took Isabel's arm in his and led her away. Tommie, watching her from his chair, lifted his little white muzzle as his playfellow looked back on passing the doorway. The long, melancholy farewell howl of the dog was the last sound Isabel Miller heard as she left the house.

PART THE SECOND.

THE DISCOVERY.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the day after Isabel left Lady Lydiard's house, Mr Troy set forth for the head office in Whitehall to consult the police on the question of the missing money. He had previously sent information of the robbery to the Bank of England, and had also advertised the loss in the daily newspapers.

The air was so pleasant and the sun was so bright that he determined on proceeding to his destination on foot. He was hardly out of sight of his own offices when he was overtaken by a friend, who was also walking in the direction of Whitehall. This gentleman was a person of considerable worldly wisdom and experience; he had been officially associated with cases of striking and notorious crime, in which government had lent its assistance to discover and punish the criminals. The opinion of a person in this position might be of the greatest value to Mr. Troy, whose practice as a solicitor had thus far never brought him into collision with thieves and mysteries. He accordingly decided, in Isabel's interests, on confiding to his friend the nature of his errand to the police. Concealing the names, but concealing nothing else, he described what had happened on the previous day at Lady Lydiard's house, and then put the question plainly to his companion:

"What would you do in my place?"

"In your place," his friend answered, quietly, "I should not waste time and money in consulting the police."

"Not consult the police!" exclaimed Mr. Troy, in amazement. "Surely I have not made myself understood? I am going to the head office, and I have got a letter of introduction to the chief inspector in the detective department. I am afraid I omitted to mention that."

"It doesn't make any difference," proceeded the other, as coolly as ever. "You have asked for my advice, and I give you my advice. Tear up your letter of introduction, and don't stir a step farther in the direction of Whitehall."

Mr. Troy began to understand. "You don't believe in the detective police?" he said.

"Who *can* believe in them who reads the newspapers and remembers what he reads?" his friend rejoined. "Fortunately for the detective department, the public in general forgets what it reads. Go to your club and look at the criminal history of our own time recorded in the newspapers. Every crime is more or less a mystery. You will see that the mysteries which the police discover are, almost without exception, mysteries made penetrable by the commonest capacity, through the extraordinary stupidity exhibited in the means taken to hide the crime. On the other hand, let the guilty man or woman be a resolute and intelligent person, capable of setting his (or her) wits fairly against the wits of the police—in other words, let the mystery really *be* a mystery—and cite me a case if you can (a really difficult and perplexing case) in which the criminal has not escaped. Mind, I don't charge the police with neglecting their work. No doubt they do their best, and take the greatest pains in following the routine to which they have been trained. It is their misfortune, not their fault, that there is no man of superior intelligence among them—I mean no man who is capable, in great emergencies, of placing himself above conventional methods and following a new way of his own. There have been such men in the police—men naturally endowed with that faculty of mental analysis which can decompose a mystery, resolve it into its component parts, and find the clew at the bottom, no matter how remote from ordinary observation it may be. But those men have died or have retired. One of them would have been invaluable to you in the case you have just mentioned to me. As things are, unless you are wrong in believing in the young lady's innocence, the person who has stolen that bank note will be no easy person to find. In my opinion there is only one man now in London who is likely to be of the slightest assistance to you, and he is not in the police."

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Troy.

"An old rogue, who was once in your branch of the legal profession," the friend answered. "You may, perhaps, remember the man; they call him 'Old Sharon.'"

"What! the scoundrel who was struck off the roll of attorneys years since? Is he still alive?"

"Alive and prospering. He lives in a court or a lane running out of Longacre, and he offers advice to persons interested in recovering missing objects of any sort. Whether you have lost your wife or lost your cigar case, Old Sharon is equally useful to you. He has an inbred capacity for reading the riddle the right way in cases of mystery, great or small. In short, he possesses exactly that analytical faculty to which I alluded just now. I have his address at my office, if you think it worth while to try him."

"Who can trust such a man?" Mr. Troy objected. "He would be sure to deceive me."

"You are entirely mistaken. Since he was struck off the rolls Old Sharon has discovered that the straight way is, on the whole, the best way, even in a man's own interests. His consultation fee is a guinea; and he gives a signed estimate beforehand for any supplementary expenses that may follow. I can tell you (this is, of course, strictly between ourselves) that the authorities at my office took his advice in a government case that puzzled the police. We approached him, of course, through persons who were to be trusted to represent us without betraying the source from which their instructions were derived, and we found the old rascal's advice well worth paying for. It is quite likely that he may not succeed so well in your case. Try the police, by all means; and if they fail, why there is Sharon as a last resource."

This arrangement commended itself to Mr. Troy's professional caution. He went on to Whitehall, and he tried the detective police. They at once adopted the obvious conclusion to persons of ordinary capacity—the conclusion that Isabel was the thief.

Acting on this conviction, the authorities sent an experienced woman from the office to Lady Lydiard's house to examine the poor girl's clothes and ornaments before they were packed up and sent after her to her aunt's. The search led to nothing. The only objects of any value that were discovered had been presents from Lady Lydiard. No jewelers' or milliners' bills were among the papers found in her desk. Not a sign of secret extravagance in dress was to be seen anywhere. Defeated so far, the police proposed next to have Isabel privately watched. There might be a prodigal lover somewhere in the background, with ruin staring him in the face unless he could raise five hundred pounds. Lady Lydiard (who had only consented to the search under stress of persuasive argument from Mr. Troy) resented this ingenious idea as an insult. She declared that if Isabel was watched the girl should know of it instantly from her own lips. The police listened with perfect resignation and decorum, and politely shifted their ground. A certain suspicion (they remarked) always rested in cases of this sort on the servants. Would her ladyship object to private inquiries into the characters and proceedings of the servants? Her ladyship instantly objected, in the most positive terms. Thereupon the "inspector" asked for a minute's private conversation with Mr. Troy. "The thief is certainly a member of Lady Lydiard's household," this functionary remarked, in his politely positive way. "If her ladyship persists in refusing to let us make the necessary inquiries our hands are tied, and the case comes to an end through no fault of ours. If her ladyship changes her mind perhaps you will drop me a line, sir, to that effect. Good morning."

So the experiment of consulting the police came to an untimely end. The one result obtained was the expression of purblind opinion by the authorities of the detective department, which pointed at Isabel or at one of the servants as the undiscovered thief. Thinking the matter over in the retirement of his own office, and not forgetting his promise to Isabel to leave no means untried of establishing her innocence, Mr. Troy could see but one alternative left to him. He took up his pen and wrote to his friend at the government office. There was nothing for it now but to run the risk and try Old Sharon.

CHAPTER IX.

The next day Mr. Troy (taking Robert Moody with him as a valuable witness) rang the bell at the mean and dirty lodging house in which Old Sharon received the clients who stood in need of his advice.

They were led up stairs to a back room on the second floor of the house. Entering the room, they discovered, through a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, a small, fat, bald-headed, dirty old man in an arm chair, robed in a tattered flannel dressing gown, with a short pipe in his mouth, a pug dog on his lap and a French novel in his hands.

"Is it business?" asked Old Sharon, speaking in a hoarse, asthmatical voice, and fixing a pair of bright, shameless black eyes attentively on the two visitors.

"It *is* business," Mr. Troy answered, looking at the old rogue who had disgraced an honorable profession as he might have looked at a reptile which had just risen rampant at his feet. "What is your fee for a consultation?"

"You give me a guinea and I'll give you half an hour." With this reply Old Sharon held out his unwashed hand across the rickety, ink-splashed table at which he was sitting.

Mr. Troy would not have touched him with the tips of his own fingers for £1,000. He laid the guinea on the table.

Old Sharon burst into a fierce laugh—a laugh strangely accompanied by a frowning contraction of his eyebrows, and a frightful exhibition of the whole inside of his mouth. "I'm not clean enough for you, eh?" he said, with an appearance of being very much amused. "There's a dirty old man described in this book that is a little like me." He held up his French novel. "Have you read it? A capital story—well put together. Ah, you haven't read it? You have got a pleasure to come. I say, do you mind tobacco smoke? I think faster while I smoke—that's all."

Mr. Troy's respectable hand waived a silent permission to smoke, given under dignified protest.

"All right," said Old Sharon. "Now, get on."

He laid himself back in his chair and puffed out his smoke, with eyes lazily half closed, like the eyes of the pug dog on his lap. At that moment, indeed, there was a curious resemblance between the two. They both seemed to be preparing themselves, in the same idle way, for the same comfortable nap.

Mr. Troy stated the circumstances under which the five hundred pound note had disappeared in clear and consecutive narrative. When he had done Old Sharon suddenly opened his eyes. The pug dog suddenly opened his eyes. Old Sharon looked hard at Mr. Troy. The pug looked hard at Mr. Troy. Old Sharon spoke. The pug growled.

"I know who you are—you're a lawyer. Don't be alarmed; I never saw you before, and I don't know your name. What I do know is a lawyer's statement of facts when I hear it. Who's this?" Old Sharon looked inquisitively at Moody as he put the question.

Mr. Troy introduced Moody as a competent witness, thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances, and ready and willing to answer any questions relating to them. Old Sharon waited a little, smoking hard and thinking hard. "Now, then!" he burst out, in his fiercely sudden way, "I'm going to get to the root of the matter."

He leaned forward with his elbows on the table, and began his examination of Moody. Heartily as Mr. Troy despised and disliked the old rogue, he listened with astonishment and admiration, literally extorted from him by the marvelous ability with which the questions were adapted to the end in view. In a quarter of an hour Old Sharon had extracted from the witness everything, literally everything down to the smallest detail, that Moody could tell him. Having now, in his own phrase, "got to the root of the matter," he relit his pipe with a grunt of satisfaction, and laid himself back again in his old arm chair.

"Well," said Mr. Troy, "have you formed your opinion?"

"Yes; I've formed my opinion."

"What is it?"

Instead of replying Old Sharon winked confidentially at Mr. Troy, and put a question on his side.

"I say! is a ten pound note much of an object to you?"

"It depends," answered Mr. Troy, "on what the money is wanted for."

"Look here," said old Sharon; "I can give you an opinion for your guinea; but, mind this, its an opinion founded on hearsay—and you know as a lawyer what that is worth. Venture your ten pounds—in plain English, pay me for my time and trouble in a baffling and difficult case—and I'll give you an opinion founded on my own experience."

"Explain yourself a little more clearly," said Troy. "What do you guarantee to tell us if we venture the ten pounds?"

"I guarantee to name the person, or the persons, on whom the suspicion really rests. And if you employ me after that, I guarantee (before you pay me a half penny more) to prove that I am right by laying my hand on the thief."

"Let us have the guinea opinion first," said Mr. Troy.

Old Sharon made another frightful exhibition of the whole inside of his mouth; his laugh was louder and fiercer than ever. "I like you," he said to Mr. Troy; "you are so devilish fond of your money. Lord! how rich you must be! Now listen. Here's the guinea opinion: Suspect, in this case, the very last person on whom suspicion could possibly fall."

"Here's the guinea opinion."

Moody, listening attentively, started and changed color at these last words. Mr. Troy looked thoroughly disappointed, and made no attempt to conceal it. "Is that all?" he asked.

"All!" retorted the cynical vagabond. "You're a pretty lawyer! What more can I say when I don't know for certain whether the witness who has given me my information has misled me or not? Have I spoken to the girl and formed my own opinion? No! Have I been introduced among the servants (as errand boy, or to clean the boots and shoes, or what not), and have I formed my own judgment of *them*? No! I take your opinions for granted, and I tell you how I should set to work myself if they were my opinions too; and that's a guinea's worth—a devilish good guinea's worth to a rich man like you!"

Old Sharon's logic produced a certain effect on Mr. Troy in spite of himself. It was smartly put from his point of view—there was no denying that.

"Even if I consented to your proposal," he said, "I should object to your annoying the young lady with impertinent questions, or to your being introduced as a spy into a respectable house."

Old Sharon doubled his dirty fists and drummed with them on the rickety table in a comical frenzy of impatience while Mr. Troy was speaking.

"What the devil do you know about my way of doing my business?" he burst out, when the lawyer had done. "One of us two is talking like a born idiot, and (mind this) it isn't me. Look here! Your young lady goes out for a walk, and she meets with a dirty, shabby old beggar—I look like a shabby old beggar already, don't I? Very good. This dirty old wretch whines and whimpers and tells a long story, and gets sixpence out of the girl, and knows her by that time, inside and out, as well as if he had made her—and, mark! hasn't asked, her a single question, and, instead of annoying her, has made her happy in the performance of a charitable action. Stop a bit. I haven't done with you yet. Who blacks your boots and shoes? Look here!" He pushed his pug dog off his lap, dived under the table, appeared again with an old boot and a bottle of blacking, and set to work with tigerish activity. "I'm going out for a walk, you know, and I may as well make myself smart." With that announcement he began to sing over his work—a song of sentiment, popular in England in the early part of the present century—"'She's all my fancy painted her, she's lovely, she's divine; but her heart it is another's, and it never can be mine! Too-ral-loo-ral-loo.' I like a love song. Brush away! brush away! till I see my own pretty face in the blacking. Hey! Here's a nice, harmless, jolly old man! sings and jokes over his work, and makes the kitchen quite cheerful. What's that you say? He's a stranger, and don't talk to him too freely. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak in that way of a poor old fellow with one foot in the grave. Mrs. Cook will give him a nice bit of dinner in the scullery, and John Footman will look out an old coat for him. And when he's heard everything he wants to hear, and doesn't come back again the next day to his work, what do they think of it in the servants' hall? Do they say, 'We've had a spy among us!' Yah! you know better than that by this time. The cheerful old man has been run over in the street, or is down with the fever, or has turned up his toes in the parish dead house—that's what they say in the servants' hall. Try me in your own kitchen, and see if your servants take me for a spy. Come, come, Mr. Lawyer! out with your ten pounds, and don't waste any more precious time about it!"

"I will consider, and let you know," said Mr. Troy.

Old Sharon laughed more ferociously than ever, and hobbled round the table in a great hurry to the place at which Moody was sitting. He laid one hand on the steward's shoulder, and pointed derisively with the other to Mr. Troy.

"I say, Mr. Silent-man! Bet you £5 I never hear of that lawyer again!"

Silently attentive all through the interview (except when he was answering questions), Moody only replied in the fewest possible words. "I don't bet," was all he said. He showed no resentment at Sharon's familiarity, and he appeared to find no amusement in Sharon's extraordinary talk. The old vagabond seemed actually to produce a serious impression on him. When Mr. Troy set the example of rising to go, he still kept his seat and looked at the lawyer as if he regretted leaving the atmosphere of tobacco smoke reeking in the dirty room.

"Have you anything to say before we go?" Mr. Troy asked.

Moody rose slowly and looked at Old Sharon. "Not just now, sir," he replied, looking away again, after a moment's reflection.

Old Sharon interpreted Moody's look and Moody's reply from his own peculiar point of view. He suddenly drew the steward away into a corner of the room.

"I say!" he began, in a whisper. "Upon your solemn word of honor, you know—are you as rich as the lawyer there?"

"Certainly not."

"Look here! It's half price to a poor man. If you feel like coming back, on your own account, five pounds will do from *you*. There! there! Think of it—think of it."

"Now, then!" said Mr. Troy, waiting for his companion, with the door open in his hand. He looked back at Sharon when Moody joined him. The old vagabond was settled again in his armchair, with his dog in his lap, his pipe in his mouth, and his French novel in his hand, exhibiting exactly the picture of frowzy comfort which he had presented when his visitors first entered the room.

"Good day," said Mr. Troy, with haughty condescension.

"Don't interrupt me," rejoined Old Sharon, absorbed in his novel. "You've had your guinea's worth. Lord! what a lovely book this is! Don't interrupt me."

"Impudent scoundrel!" said Mr. Troy when he and Moody were in the street again. "What could my friend mean by recommending him? Fancy his expecting me to trust him with £10! I consider even the guinea completely thrown away."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Moody, "I don't quite agree with you there."

"What! you don't mean to tell me you understand that oracular sentence of his—'Suspect the very last person on whom suspicion could possibly fall'? Rubbish!"

"I don't say I understand it, sir. I only say it has set me thinking."

"Thinking of what? Do your suspicions point to the thief?"

"If you will please to excuse me, Mr. Troy, I should like to wait a while before I answer that."

Mr. Troy stood suddenly still, and eyed his companion a little distrustfully.

"Are you going to turn detective policeman on your own account?" he asked.

"There's nothing I won't turn to, and try, to help Miss Isabel in this matter," Moody answered, firmly. "I have saved a few hundred pounds in Lady Lydiard's service, and I am ready to spend every farthing of it if I can only discover the thief."

Mr. Troy walked on again. "Miss Isabel seems to have a good friend in you," he said. He was (perhaps unconsciously) a little offended by the independent tone in which the steward spoke, after he had himself engaged to take the vindication of the girl's innocence into his own hands.

"Miss Isabel has a devoted servant and slave in me," Moody answered, with passionate enthusiasm.

"Very creditable; I haven't a word to say against it," Mr. Troy rejoined. "But don't forget that the young lady has other devoted friends beside you. I am her devoted friend, for instance. I have promised to serve her, and I mean to keep my word. You will excuse me for adding that my experience and discretion are quite as likely to be useful to her as your enthusiasm. I know the world well enough to be careful in trusting strangers. It will do you no harm, Mr. Moody, to follow my example."

Moody accepted his reproof with becoming patience and resignation. "If you have anything to propose, sir, that will be of service to Miss Isabel," he said, "I shall be happy if I can assist you in the humblest capacity."

"And if not?" Mr. Troy inquired, conscious of having nothing to propose as he asked the question.

"In that case, sir, I must take my own course, and blame nobody but myself if it leads me astray."

Mr. Troy said no more; he parted from Moody at the next turning.

Pursuing the subject privately in his own mind, he decided on taking the earliest opportunity of visiting Isabel at her aunt's house, and on warning her in her future intercourse with Moody, not to trust too much to the steward's discretion. "I haven't a doubt," thought the lawyer, "of what he means to do next. The infatuated fool is going back to Old Sharon!"

To be Continued.